UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1807
11 January 1995

WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General, in Helsinki, has meetings with Finnish President and Prime Minister; expresses gratitude for Finland's contribution to United Nations work for peace and development.

+ In address to Nordic Conference, Secretary-General says Member States must learn to use United Nations to handle new forms of conflict so they can properly address imperative of development.

+ Multinational Force says security situation in Haiti is positive; notes continued progress in establishment of Haitian Interim Public Security Force and deployment of international police monitors around country.

+ Bosnian parties meet at Sarajevo airport to discuss implementation details of cessation of hostilities agreement; Co-Chairmen of International Conference on Former Yugoslavia meet with Croatian parties at Pleso.

+ United Nations to launch two major fund-raising drives for Rwanda in Geneva next week.

+ Liberian parties meet in Accra to choose composition of new Council of State; UNOMIL reports cease-fire holding throughout Liberia.

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Continuing his official visit to Finland, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with President Martti Ahtisaari at the Presidential Palace in Helsinki. The Secretary-General expressed gratitude for Finland's outstanding contribution to the work of the United Nations in the areas of peace and development. President Ahtisaari said his country would continue to provide strong support for the Organization's programmes and activities. Among the issues they discussed were the need to institutionally strengthen peace-keeping operations, the work of regional organizations, and United Nations operations in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

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The Secretary-General then attended a luncheon hosted in his honour by President Ahtisaari. The guests included the Prime Minister of Finland, Esko Aho, the Prime Minister of Iceland, David Oddsson, and the Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland. He later had a meeting with Prime Minister Aho.

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Member States must learn to use the United Nations to handle new forms of conflict, so that they and the Organization can properly address the issue of development, according to the Secretary-General. He made that comment in Helsinki today, in an address to the Nordic Countries Conference on "The Nordic Countries in the United Nations -- For Peace and Development".

The Secretary-General described development as "the primary imperative of our time", but said the United Nations was forced to focus on peace-keeping because of a distorted world picture. He went on to deal with six major instruments that the United Nations had developed over the last fifty years: preventive diplomacy and peacemaking, peace-keeping, peace-building, disarmament, sanctions, and peace enforcement. Those instruments were discussed at length in his recent position paper on peace-keeping -- a supplement to the "Agenda for Peace".

The Nordic Countries Conference is due to adopt a declaration tomorrow on the future of the United Nations. The declaration will then be considered by the Nordic Council and communicated to the Secretary-General.

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The security situation in Haiti is positive, and there has been continued progress in the establishment of the Haitian Interim Public Security Force, according to the latest report of the Multinational Force. Covering the period from 19 December to 9 January, it was transmitted by the United States to the President of the Security Council in a letter dated 9 January. The report said the Multinational Force had been focusing on developing the Haitian security system and establishing conditions for the transition to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH).

International police monitors have been deployed to ten locations around Haiti, while the Interim Public Security Force has a presence in 25 locations outside Port-au-Prince, according to the report. Those deployments, combined with the continued presence of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) forces in Cap Haitien and the addition of contracted security personnel in the capital, have allowed the continued drawdown of Multinational Force levels.

However, there was a violent incident at the headquarters of the Forces armées d'Haiti on 26 December, the report noted. The violence erupted spontaneously after poor communications led Haitian soldiers to believe they would lose their jobs and pay. A Multinational Force unit moved immediately to the headquarters and engaged armed soldiers, killing three and wounding six. There were no Multinational Force casualties and the situation was calm in the following days.

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Military leaders of the Bosnian sides met today at Sarajevo airport to discuss implementation details of the current cessation of hostilities agreement, according to a United Nations spokesman. The third meeting of the so-called Central Joint Commission established under the agreement was chaired by the Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina and by the senior UNPROFOR civil affairs official in Sarajevo.

The spokesman expressed hope that today's meeting would lead to the reopening of the Sarajevo airport routes within days. Humanitarian flights into the city resumed this afternoon after being closed this morning due to bad weather. He added that the cease-fire continued to be observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Meanwhile, the Co-Chairmen of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg and Lord Owen, met with Croatian Government and Croation Serb representatives at Pleso. Agreement was reached on certain provisions for further implementation of the Economic Agreement signed by the parties last month. The Joint Commission will meet in Knin on 27 January and in Split on 24 February.

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The United Nations system will soon launch two major fund-raising drives for Rwanda in Geneva, a spokesman for the Organization announced today. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will hold a round-table on reconstruction and rehabilitation on 18 and 19 January. A consolidated inter-agency appeal will also be launched next week. The drives will each have goals of more than $700 million for short- and medium-term assistance to Rwanda.

Meanwhile, the Government in Kigali has given the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) permission to launch a radio station. The station will become operational as soon as certain technical details have been worked out.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Liberia, Anthony Nyakyi, today attended a meeting of the Liberian parties in Accra, Ghana, a United Nations spokesman said. The meeting was convened to choose the composition of the Council of State agreed to by the parties last month. It was hosted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The spokesman went on to say that the Council of State could be installed by the end of the week. Meanwhile, the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) reported that the cease-fire was generally holding throughout Liberia and that the situation was calm.

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